

NATURALIZATION PROCEEDINGS
AT THE UNITED STATES COURT HOUSE
3rd AND CONSTITUTION AVENUE
WASHINGTON, D. C., AUGUST 14, 1956
ADDRESS OF THE HON. ALLEN W. DULLES
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

It is a very great honor to be among those welcoming you as fellow citizens of the United States of America.

This is a great moment in your lives. It is a great moment too for us who have been for years or for generations American citizens. Your gain is our gain, too. We are proud and happy to have you on our side.

America has been fortunate in its new citizens. For 150 years, we have welcomed here those who have fled persecution, those who sought relief from poverty and oppression, and those who were attracted by the opportunities of life in a democracy. They have repaid our confidence well. We know that you too will repay the confidence in you that this court will presently exemplify when it grants your petition.

Most of you have lived in this country at least five years. You know the language we speak. You have demonstrated a knowledge of the history and government of the United States. You know, therefore, what the United States can do for you. You have also, I am sure, given thought to what you can do for your new country.

I think that perhaps today, one of your greatest services might lie in the promotion of understanding between people who need help in understanding each other, for most of you stand now between two worlds.

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From your residence here you know that what we say about democracy is true. You know, for instance, that after the political conventions of this month--which will look comical if not frivolous to many foreigners--we shall somehow have chosen candidates worthy of being considered for office. And you know that three months later, after a period of sound and fury which will suggest to some foreigners that we have gone mad, several million Americans, including yourselves, will go quietly to the polls and vote their convictions. And finally you realize that those elected will really be the choice of the people of the United States, without fear or intimidation; without political manipulation or fraud.

I doubt that all foreigners realize this or believe it. It seems almost incredible that a nation of 150 million can do today what was intended for the small communities of 150 years ago--that is, freely choose from their midst the leaders they want to handle public business in their behalf.

There is something else that some foreigners do not realize or believe, partly because they have no way of knowing, and partly because their governments prevent them from knowing it. That is that the Americans are among the most peaceable people on earth. For us to be called war mongers is almost funny. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We have no motive for war. We envy no other country its good fortune. We are mindful of our own good fortune and thank God for it.

- 2 -

HS/EC- 164

We ask only to be left alone.

I am not suggesting that we are unique in this. I feel pretty sure that people anywhere ask little more. I doubt that many of them in these days feel any strong urge to disrupt their lives, their countries, and the world in order to commit aggression against their neighbors. Yet war continues to threaten the world constantly.

This would certainly be less true if there were better understanding among the peoples of the world. Those abroad who are told continual lies about the United States must believe them unless they have evidence to the contrary. But such evidence requires more than words. Seeing is believing. When you cannot see through your own eyes, you must see through those of others, and they must be eyes that you can trust not to distort the truth.

That is why people in your former homelands may well believe what you may be able to tell them about the United States. That is why you, better than any others, may be able to bring them to a better understanding of what America is.

At the same time, it is within your power, as a person still between two worlds, to help the understanding of your new fellow citizens, for the average American has trouble in understanding other countries than his own.

If you have ever tried to teach a foreign language to an American, you may have found that one of his main difficulties lies in not believing that there is any such thing as a foreign language. He is inclined to believe that foreigners really speak English but insist on spelling and pronouncing it wrong!

This is because most of us live where no foreign language is spoken for many miles around, unlike so much of the rest of the world where boundaries with foreign countries are on all sides.

Today, more Americans than ever before have travelled widely, but there still remain many of our fellow countrymen who have never been outside their own states.

It is naturally difficult for them to understand what conditions abroad are really like. Through your eyes, in which they can have confidence, they may see and understand more than they could learn even by travel.

If you come from a country that suffers under a dictatorship, tell your fellow Americans what such governments are really like. They know, but not as you know. Let them see the truth through your eyes in order that they may appreciate, as deeply as you now do, the blessings of their own democracy. In this way, you may help a fellow American to reaffirm a faith that was growing dim from complacency.

If you believe that your former country has some institutions superior to our own, tell us so. You have, as you know, perfect freedom to express your opinions here. In the United States, if we are told of a better way of doing things, we are inclined to adopt it. Most of our institutions were born here of ideas brought from abroad.

HS/HC-164

Remember that you are not obliged to be content with everything that you will find here. I am sure that as time goes on, you will find much to deplore as well as to admire in this, your new country. If you don't, you won't be typically American, I can tell you that! We, the people, complain all the time, even if it is only about the weather. We are forever complaining about our government, our public officers, the taxes we have to pay, and the restrictions under which we must do business. If the time ever comes when I do not hear a vast grumbling about one thing or another among the American people, I shall know that something has gone wrong.

But while we complain about our laws and our officials, we know who made the laws and chose the officials. We did. And we know what we can do if we really object to them. We can change them.

Not only that, but we can change private institutions too. If we think one store is charging too much or selling us a bad quality of goods, we go to another. One result is usually an improvement in the first. This is called competition. It works well with us. This is why we have never become a party to various experiments which were based on the theory that a powerful government could control business affairs better than the people could through the effects of competition.

So, I hope that as American citizens, when you come up against something you don't like, you will express yourself on the point and take the measures a citizen has at his disposal to do something about it--doing it as Americans have always done, within the law and with an object of bringing about liberty and justice for all.

- 5 -

HS/HC- 164

Again, before Mr. Walsh concludes this part of the ceremony, let me welcome you to brotherhood in America. And let me express my best wishes for happy and successful citizenship to you and to the future generations that will inherit the privileges and responsibilities which become yours today.